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Chapter Twenty-four

INDUSTRY AND TRADE IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

If "industry" be taken to include all activities connected with processing, then there is more industry in Southeast Asia than appears at first glance, though not much manufacturing in mechanised factories may be found. The territory is, however, overwhelmingly agricultural and in almost every part of the region it is subsistence agriculture which employs and sustains the largest number of people. Much manual processing is done by these subsistence agriculturists on their own little farms to prepare their production for their family consumption.

Cottage Industries

The tradition of being self-supporting in each territory, the national counterpart of individual subsistence farming, is very strong even today, finding expression in the widespread cottage industry of weaving and in that Southeast Asia custom of making a single length of span-broad, hand-made cloth the basis of a skirt-like dress—the *sarong*, *lungyi*, *panung* and so on. Today this domestic weaving, where it has managed to persist in spite of competition from cheap imported cloths, uses imported cotton yarn, although parts of Burma still weave homegrown silk, and Siam and Indochina continue home-weaving on the basis of Indochinese silk. Only in Java has the "cottage industry" become elaborated into a village factory industry for a more intensified and commercialised production of sarongs. Ninety-two per cent of Java's *batik sarongs* (printed cotton skirts worn by men and women alike) come from factories of less than 80 workers each; this specialised process of dyeing in patterns defined by wax is now done by the small factory working upon imported cotton cloth.

The other considerable domestic industry deriving from the subsistence tradition is that of making innumerable varieties of articles from plaited palm leaves. Containers of many sorts, hats, domestic utensils, house walls, mats, fish traps and agricultural